Legal Services Society

2016/17 – 2018/19
SERVICE PLAN

Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.legalaid.bc.ca

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Accountability Statement

The 2016/17 – 2018/19 Legal Services Society (LSS) service plan was prepared under the Board's direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* and the BC Reporting Principles. The plan is consistent with government's strategic priorities and fiscal plan. The Board is accountable for the contents of the plan, including what has been included in the plan and how it has been reported.

All significant assumptions, policy decisions, events and identified risks, as of January 1, 2016, have been considered in preparing the plan. The performance measures presented are consistent with Legal Service Society's mandate and goals, and focus on aspects critical to the organization's performance. The targets in this plan have been determined based on an assessment of Legal Service Society's operating environment, forecast conditions, risk assessment and past performance.

Suzette Narbonne
Chair, LSS Board of Directors

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Strategic Direction and Context

Strategic Direction

To advance LSS strategic goals, we will be working on three priority actions for 2016/17, as outlined in our mandate letter (www.lss.bc.ca/about/ourMandate.php). The first is the continued enhancement of our new Client Information System (CIS) to support the delivery of efficient and effective LSS services. This priority action is aligned with Goal 3 and Taxpayer Accountability Principles (TAP) under service and cost consciousness. The second is to monitor, evaluate, and improve the five Justice Innovation Transformation Initiatives (JITI) pilot projects. This action is aligned with Goals 1 to 4 and TAP under integrity, cost consciousness, and accountability. The third is to consult with Aboriginal communities, the Ministry of Justice, and other key stakeholders to identify opportunities for LSS to better meet the legal needs of Aboriginal people in BC. This third action is aligned with Goals 1, 2, and 4 and TAP under service and respect. In addition to these priority actions, LSS will be operating MyLawBC, an innovative, interactive website that uses guided pathways to connect users with solutions to several common legal issues.

Operating Environment

To operate within our funding envelope, LSS sets strict eligibility guidelines for all services but faces limited flexibility to respond to fluctuating service demands. We continue to apply robust budgeting and planning practices, supported by business intelligence and program evaluation information, to deliver effective and cost-efficient legal aid services to clients most in need.

LSS is also facing a multi-pronged capacity challenge, comprised of a competitive labour market, an aging workforce, and a prolonged high workload for all LSS staff. In response, LSS is undertaking several employee engagement initiatives, and in 2015/2016 implemented a Succession Management Program to support the development and retention of skilled employees. However, due to overwork, and an ongoing freeze on excluded management salaries, the general risk of decreased staff morale and productivity is currently very high. In addition to capacity challenges, LSS faces aging infrastructure, including outdated business-critical systems such as Finance, HR/payroll, and our call centre. Requests for the society to dedicate its skills, expertise, and resources to collaborative initiatives are in increasing demand. However, LSS has very limited capacity to undertake new or expand current innovative projects. Sustaining and improving both staff capacity and system infrastructure is critical to ensuring uninterrupted delivery of legal aid services to clients. LSS continues to refine and enhance the functionality of the new CIS system and related business processes, which has required both LSS staff and lawyers to adapt to a new way of administering legal aid. Alongside these refinements, we will continue to consult with and provide training to all users to maximize the potential of this new platform.

LSS engagement with the bar, and overall lawyer satisfaction, remain a focus. Working with the new CIS system, and long-standing low tariff rates paid to lawyers, impacts the society's ability to attract and retain lawyers to do legal aid work. This risk of insufficient lawyer supply is especially problematic in rural and remote communities, where the loss of even one lawyer could have a major impact on the availability of legal aid services to the surrounding region.

Early evaluation results from the JITI pilot projects have been positive, and LSS will work in 2016/17 to complete evaluations of these pilot projects. LSS will work with government to provide the business cases to support a request for continued ongoing core funding for these JITI projects.

Further development of legal aid services for Aboriginal clients presents a significant opportunity for LSS to address a priority service need. LSS will build on its relationships with First Nations and our network of lawyers and community partners to help identify, develop, and deliver innovative and appropriate services.

Performance Plan

Goals, Strategies, Measures, and Targets

To advance the LSS vision, we develop goals, strategies, and performance measures that engage LSS staff, our service partners, and our clients in finding timely and lasting solutions to clients' legal issues while managing to budget. Our service plan is aligned with TAP. In particular, our third goal ("LSS manages resources soundly") and associated performance measures are centred around ensuring that we provide effective and efficient services, and providing maximum benefit to clients within the funding and staffing resources available to us.

LSS conducts four major stakeholder surveys, which provide data for many of our performance measures. We develop action plans to address the survey results and implement identified relevant operational and service improvements. The client satisfaction, work environment, and lawyer surveys are conducted triennially, while the public opinion poll is conducted annually. LSS staff develop the survey questions and methodology, and independent research organizations carry out the data collection, analysis, and presentation of a final report. The society also monitors and reports on key internal operational and financial data, which are tested internally. The new CIS will provide opportunities to track and report on new operational measures.

LSS benchmarks its performance against like organizations, where possible, using the Common Measurement Tool (CMT). CMT is an independent client satisfaction benchmarking tool and data service that allows us to compare client satisfaction results against agencies providing similar services. We benchmark our work environment score against the BC Public Service and like Crowns using statistics provided by BC Stats. Though legal aid plans across Canada have not yet developed a common method of measuring performance, we regularly share performance and outcome information.

We set survey targets by considering benchmark data and evaluating the level of improvement possible given the strategies and activities planned in the coming period. For operational and financial measures, we set targets based on a reasonable expectation of performance based on historical results. Meeting our targets would demonstrate continuous improvement in stakeholder satisfaction with, support for, and use of our services, as well as financial responsibility, all of which are necessary to achieve our goals.

Goal 1: People with low incomes who have legal issues use LSS services.

LSS needs to ensure our services are accessible, address the needs of clients, are culturally appropriate, and that the public is aware that these services are available.

Strategies

- Make it easier for clients to access legal aid services.
- Partner with Aboriginal and other underserved communities to deliver services that support positive client outcomes.
- Support service partners and front-line workers to deliver effective and efficient services.
- Support clients to be active participants in solving their legal issues.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2013/14 Actual	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Forecast	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	2018/19 Target
a) Percent of clients satisfied with the accessibility of LSS services[1]	N/A	69%	N/A	N/A	73%	N/A
b) Percent of clients satisfied with the helpfulness of LSS services[1]	N/A	68%	N/A	N/A	72%	N/A
c) Percent of clients satisfied overall with LSS services[1]	N/A	66%	N/A	N/A	70%	N/A
d) Percent of clients satisfied with LSS support to help them participate in resolving their legal issues[1]	N/A	66%	N/A	N/A	70%	N/A

[1] Data is from the triennial Client Services Survey.

Discussion

Overall client satisfaction with the accessibility and helpfulness of LSS services and support shows that we are providing clients with the services they need when and where they need them, fulfilling our mandate to help people solve their legal problems and to facilitate access to justice. Targets are set based on a reasonable expectation of improvement over results in baselines or the previous survey; see Performance Plan on page 7.

Goal 2: People with low incomes get help with related legal issues so they can solve and prevent legal problems.

Clients' legal problems often arise from or lead to other problems such as health, housing, and debt issues. By working with other service providers to help clients get support for these issues, LSS can improve client outcomes as well as reduce clients' use of justice, health, and social services over the long term.

Strategies

- Collaborate with service partners to assess and refer clients to services for their related legal issues.
- Support front-line workers to assess and refer clients to services for their related legal issues.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2013/14 Actual	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Forecast	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	2018/19 Target
a) Percent of clients satisfied with the level of support LSS gave them to address their related legal issues[1]	N/A	59%	N/A	N/A	63%	N/A
b) Percent of lawyers satisfied with LSS support for increasing their ability to help clients address related legal issues[2]	N/A	N/A	N/A	35%	N/A	N/A
c) Percent of lawyers who support the integrated approach to providing legal aid services[2]	N/A	N/A	N/A	69%	N/A	N/A

[1] Data is from the triennial Client Services Survey.

[2] Data is from the triennial Tariff Lawyer Satisfaction Survey. The 2015/16 lawyer survey has been postponed to 2016/17, to better align with other LSS evaluation work.

Discussion

Measures (a) and (b) assess the effectiveness of the support provided by LSS to clients and lawyers to help clients address their legal issues. Measure (c) indicates the level of support from lawyers in advancing this goal. Targets are set based on a reasonable expectation of improvement over results in baselines or the previous survey; see Performance Plan on page 7.

Goal 3: LSS manages resources soundly.

LSS must manage resources effectively and efficiently to ensure we are achieving the optimum benefit for the society's clients within available funding.

Strategies

- Foster employee engagement and retention of key staff through professional development, succession management, and organizational communication.
- Engage with and develop stronger relationships with legal aid lawyers.
- Improve information technology systems to respond to a changing environment.
- Improve the nimbleness and flexibility of LSS business processes to support capacity.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2013/14 Actual	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Forecast	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	2018/19 Target
a) Overall average employee engagement[1]	69	N/A	N/A	70	N/A	N/A
b) Percent of lawyers satisfied with the overall support provided by LSS[2]	N/A	N/A	N/A	62%	N/A	N/A
c) Number of new lawyers taking more than three referrals in the first six months[3]	73	53	>60	>60	>60	>60
d) Percent of the public that supports the provision of legal aid services[4]	93%	94%	>90%	>90%	>90%	>90%

[1] Data is from the triennial Work Environment Survey.

[2] Data is from the triennial Tariff Lawyer Satisfaction Survey. The 2015/16 lawyer survey has been postponed to 2016/17, to better align with other LSS evaluation work.

[3] Data is from our client information system.

[4] Data is from our annual Public Opinion Poll.

Discussion

High employee engagement in the public sector, tracked by measure (a), is linked to improved service for clients. Measures (b) and (c) qualitatively and quantitatively assess our progress on maintaining a sustainable supply of lawyers to provide services to clients across BC. Sustained public support for legal aid, measure (d), reflects public confidence in our services and how well we are managing the organization. Targets are set based on a reasonable expectation of improvement over results in baselines or the previous survey; see Performance Plan on page 7.

Goal 4: LSS provides leadership in justice innovation.

LSS believes that innovation is needed to bring about the fundamental justice system changes required for clients to achieve timely and lasting resolutions to their legal issues.

Strategies

- Pilot evidence-based legal aid initiatives to improve access and outcomes.
- Communicate LSS's strategic direction to stakeholders.
- Consult with Aboriginal communities and other stakeholders to identify opportunities to develop innovative services and increase access to justice for Aboriginal people.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2013/14 Actual	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Forecast	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	2018/19 Target
a) Volume of references to LSS and justice innovation[1]	20	40	25+	30+	35+	40

[1] Data is from an annual search of academic literature, stakeholder reports, and media. Our methodology included tracking references to LSS in relation to its justice innovation ideas and projects through Google Scholar, Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies, HeinOnline, and stakeholder websites. The search was limited to a specific set of search terms and conducted manually.

Discussion

A high volume of references to LSS's justice innovation proposals in academic literature, government reports, and the media indicates that LSS's ideas are being reviewed and considered by key justice system decision makers and opinion makers. This reflects the growing reach of LSS's influence. Targets are set based on a reasonable expectation of improvement over baseline results in prior years; however, actual results from 2014/15 are likely to be unusually high because of the JITI pilot project launches, so incremental target increases are instead based on gradual improvement from 2015/16 results.

Financial Plan

Summary Financial Outlook 2015 – 2019 (in millions)

	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Forecast	2016/17[1] Budget	2017/18[1] Budget	2018/19[1] Budget
Revenue					
Provincial transfers[2]	67.2	67.6	68.0	68.1	68.2
Large and major cases[2,3]	5.0	5.5	4.7	4.7	4.7
Justice transformation initiatives[2]	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Other revenue	5.5	4.8	4.0	4.0	4.0
Total Revenue	79.7	79.6	78.7	78.8	78.9
Expenses					
Tariffs	58.2	58.9	55.8	55.8	55.8
Justice transformation initiatives	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Salaries	11.2	11.7	11.8	11.9	12.0
Contracted Services	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8
Premises	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.1
Computers	1.6	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.8
Amortization[3]	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Office	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Travel	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other	0.2	0.7	1.2	1.2	1.2
Total Expenses[3]	79.8	79.6	78.7	78.8	78.9
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	(0.1)	—	—	—	—
Accumulated Surplus	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Capital Expenditures	2.1	0.6	0.9	0.1	0.7

Notes

[1] The budgets for the years 2016/17 through 2018/19 inclusive are projections and not yet approved. As per section 18 of the *Legal Services Society Act*, LSS will seek budget approval from the Attorney General in each of those respective years. LSS will provide tariff services budgeting to the bottom line in each year.

[2] Budgets for large and major cases are based on minimum approved budgets and may not reflect actual costs. In 2016/17, we estimate that Category B cases will cost $2.6 million (2015/16 — $2.1 million) and Category C cases will cost $6.9 million (2015/16 — $2.7 million) based on our forecasts as of January 7, 2016. LSS will manage expenditures to the available funding provided by the ministry as in previous years.

[3] On December 18, 2012, the board restricted the accumulated surplus to be used for board-directed strategic initiatives. They allocated $6.3 million for the CIS project as a board strategic initiative. CIS went live on April 27, 2015, and these costs have been capitalized. An annual amortization cost of $0.85 million per year will be charged to Operations for the next 10 years.

[4] Allocation of expenses between various categories is subject to change.

[5] These revenues are funded by the Provincial Government.

Key Forecast Assumptions

The tariff budgets are based on our best estimate of volume of applications and contracts, contract rates, and average case costs taking into consideration any known changes in policies, initiatives, historical trends, etc.

Sensitivity Analysis

1. The tariff budgets have not been adjusted for any changes to government policy, or new initiatives that may impact the society.
2. The tariff budgets have not been adjusted for any potential CIS and IFD impacts.
3. The tariff budgets have not been adjusted for any potential claims related to significant unbudgeted events.

Management Perspective on Future Financial Outlook

LSS is dependent on government to finance the majority of its expenditures. It also receives revenue from non-government sources that are tied to interest rates. Should government or interest rate related revenues continue to remain low as the case, this would negatively impact our ability to provide services.

Appendix A:

Hyperlinks to Additional Information

Governance
Board Governance: www.lss.bc.ca/about/ourGovernance.php
Senior Management: www.lss.bc.ca/about/executiveDirector.php

Organizational Overview
Mandate: www.lss.bc.ca/about/ourMandate.php
Who We Are; and Our Vision, Mission, and Values: www.lss.bc.ca/about/index.php
Legal Aid Services: www.lss.bc.ca/legal_aid/
Legal Aid Locations: www.lss.bc.ca/legal_aid/legalAidOffices.php